

REMARKS

Claims 1 to 12 are pending. Claim 3 is currently canceled. Claim 1-2 and 4-12 are currently amended. Claim 1 has been amended to add more detailed steps to replace the one step of “joining...” and, thus, distinguish from the art. Support for the amendment to claim 1 can be found, for example, in Figs. 1a-1d and on page 5, lines 9-17 of the specification as filed. Claim 2 has been amended to depend upon claim 1 and to add the feature of carrying out three steps in a vacuum. Support for this amendment can be found, for example, on page 6, line 2 of the specification as filed. All subsequent claims (4 through 12) have been amended to depend upon claim 1 and to recite “A semiconductor surface protecting method”. Other dependencies and adjectives have been added to enhance the claim set. A Request for Continued Examination (RCE) is being submitted herewith. Reconsideration of the application is requested.

The rejections of record have been described in previous responses. The following comments will show how the amended claim set overcomes the previous rejections and puts the case in condition for allowance.

§ 103 Rejections

Claim 1 stands rejected under 35 USC § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Oka (6551906) in view of Farnworth (6180527).

It is the Examiner’s position that Oka teaches the steps of joining the circuit side of said semiconductor wafer to a polymeric film material via a surface protecting layer; and grinding said wafer. It is the Examiner’s position that Oka does not teach joining via a fluid surface protecting layer; hardening said surface protecting layer, and wherein the grinding is done after hardening said surface protecting layer. The Examiner is relying on Farnworth for the missing elements.

Amended claim 1 replaces the “joining” step with three steps 1) providing a fluid surface protecting layer which can be hardened by heat or light, 2) coating the fluid surface protecting

layer on the circuit side of the semiconductor wafer, and 3) placing a polymeric film material over the fluid surface protecting layer. Oka does not teach or suggest these three steps in order. In contrast, Oka teaches the use of a “protective tape...formed by the tape substrate and the adhesive” (see col. 3, lines 39-41 of Oka). The tape is “adhered to the front side of the wafer..” (see col. 3, lines 36-37 of Oka). Then the wafer is ground with the protective tape still adhered (see col. 3, lines 50-54 of Oka). The Examiner has not shown that teaches or suggests the steps of 1) providing a fluid surface protecting layer which can be hardened by heat or light, 2) coating the fluid surface protecting layer on the circuit side of the semiconductor wafer, and then 3) placing a polymeric film material over the fluid surface protecting layer, in that order, as required by Applicant’s amended claim 1. In Oka, the tape is already made and in contact with the tape substrate when it is adhered to the wafer. In amended claim 1, the fluid surface protecting layer is first applied to the wafer and then a polymeric film material is placed over the fluid before it is hardened.

Furthermore, the Examiner has not shown where Farnworth teaches or suggests placing a polymeric film over the fluid surface protecting layer. On the contrary, Farnworth teaches a reference layer 15 (see Fig. 1a-1d, col. 4, lines 52-67, and col 6., lines 32-67 of Farnworth). This reference layer is applied as a liquid or spreadable slurry or spreadable solid. Then, a portion of the reference layer 15 is removed from the exposed surface 17 of the reference layer 15 to provide a flat reference surface 18 (see col. 4, lines 52-67). In order to carry out this “removal” step, Farnworth necessarily cannot have a polymeric film material that has been placed over the fluid protecting layer as required by Applicant’s amended claim 1.

For at least these reasons, the Examiner has not shown that the combination of Oka and Farnworth teach or suggest all of the limitations of Applicant’s amended claim 1. Therefore, the Examiner has not made a proper *prima facie* case of obviousness as required by MPEP § 2143. As a result, the rejection of amended claim1 is improper, the Applicant has overcome the rejection, and it is respectfully requested that the Examiner withdraw the rejection and allow the claim.

With the entry of the amended claim set, all remaining claims (2 and 4-12) depend upon claim 1 and add further limitations thereto. Since claim 1 overcomes the obviousness rejection presented by the Examiner in the previous Office Action, likewise so do claims 2, and 4-12.

The Applicant requests that these claims be entered due to the Request for Continued Examination being filed herewith, and that the claims and that the Examiner allow the amended claim set. If there are any further questions or discussions that can help advance this case to allowance, the Applicant invites the Examiner to call his representative.

In view of the above, it is submitted that the application is in condition for allowance.

Examination and reconsideration of the application as amended is requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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